



# **Ocean Country Partnership Programme**

## **Improving Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in the Environmental and Development Sector**

### **Stakeholder Workshop**

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**Date: February 2025**

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**Recommended citation:** J.E.A. 2025. Improving Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in the Environmental and Development Sector: Stakeholder Workshop, 22 pp.

**Funding Acknowledgement:** This project was funded with UK International Development from the UK Government.

**Evidence Quality Assurance:** This report is compliant with [JNCC's Evidence Quality Assurance Policy](#).

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## Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	4
<b>1. Introduction</b> .....	6
<b>2. Participant Demographics</b> .....	6
<b>3. Workshop Agenda</b> .....	10
<b>4. Key Discussions and Findings</b> .....	11
<b>4.1 Session 1: GESI and SEAH Fundamentals</b> .....	11
<b>4.2 Session 2: Community Issues Mapping</b> .....	11
<b>4.3 Session 3: Case Studies and Best Practices</b> .....	14
<b>4.4 Session 4: Current Integration and Transformation</b> .....	16
<b>4.5 Session 5: Recommendation Development</b> .....	16
<b>5. Next Steps for Implementation</b> .....	19
<b>5.1 Commitment to a Common Platform and Network of Practitioners</b> 19	
<b>5.2 Ensuring Lasting Impact</b> .....	19
<b>5.3 Concrete Steps For Implementation</b> .....	20
<b>6. Workshop Outcome Evaluation: Pre and Post Workshop Assessment Analysis</b>	20
<b>7. Challenges and Areas for Improvement</b> .....	21
<b>8. Recommendations for Future workshops</b> .....	22

# Executive Summary

The Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) and Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (SEAH) Workshop, held on 8 February 2025 in Malé, convened 51 stakeholders from across the environmental and sustainable development sectors in the Maldives. The workshop aimed to:

- Raise awareness of GESI and SEAH principles in policy and practice.
- Identify challenges faced by vulnerable groups in the sector.
- Share best practices and case studies on GESI integration.
- Develop actionable recommendations to make sector activities more GESI-sensitive and transformative.

Through interactive discussions, panel sessions, and group exercises, participants explored institutional barriers to GESI, assessed SEAH risks, and co-developed strategies for inclusivity.

Participants identified key GESI barriers, recognising women, Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), migrant workers, and youth as groups facing systemic exclusion in environmental policies and programmes. Case studies on community-led gender-responsive environmental initiatives and SEAH risk mitigation strategies provided practical insights for organisations and policymakers, demonstrating effective approaches to integrating GESI into environmental projects. The workshop also highlighted critical gaps in SEAH implementation, with participants expressing a need for structured training, robust reporting mechanisms, and institutional support to address SEAH risks more effectively. Finally, the workshop resulted in a strong commitment to action, with stakeholders developing recommendations focused on policy reforms, leadership inclusion, expanded training initiatives, and enhanced accountability measures to integrate GESI and SEAH principles more effectively into their respective organisations.

## Key Recommendations:

To strengthen GESI and SEAH integration, participants endorsed the following priority actions:

### 1. Strengthening Organizational GESI & SEAH Policies

- Require all organizations and partners to adopt a clear SEAH policy with zero tolerance for violations.
- Implement mandatory SEAH training for staff, volunteers, and consultants.
- Establish anonymous reporting channels and survivor-centered grievance redressal mechanisms.

### 2. Expanding Access & Representation

- Increase women's leadership in marine conservation, sustainability programs, and local councils.
- Ensure PWDs, youth, and underrepresented groups have equal opportunities in decision-making.
- Provide childcare assistance and flexible training options to remove participation barriers.

### 3. Embedding GESI in Project Design & Implementation

- Develop standardized GESI-sensitive project frameworks, including gender-disaggregated data collection.

- Strengthen local councils and CSOs through grants and mentorship programs.
- Establish community-driven environmental initiatives that empower women and marginalized groups.

#### 4. Strengthening SEAH Prevention & Response

- Train SEAH focal points within organizations to improve accountability.
- Increase awareness campaigns using accessible advocacy materials in offices, project sites, and training spaces.
- Expand local partnerships to build safe spaces and shelters for survivors of SEAH.

# 1. Introduction

The Maldives faces critical challenges in ensuring equitable development and social protection for several highly vulnerable populations. As a result, consideration of Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) and Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (SEAH) are increasingly becoming important for national and international programmes. Whilst some projects and initiatives are working in this space, it is a relatively new concept for many stakeholders in Maldives.

As a result, a workshop was planned to explore the concepts of GESI and SEAH with stakeholders, designed to foster awareness, dialogue, and action around GESI and SEAH, specifically within the environmental and sustainable development sector in the Maldives. The primary objective was to bring together key stakeholders to discuss how sectoral activities could become more GESI-sensitive and transformative. The workshop provided a platform for sharing perspectives, identifying challenges, and co-developing strategies to integrate GESI principles into environmental and development initiatives.

Organized on behalf of the Ocean Country Partnership Programme (OCP), the event convened a total of 51 participants, including representatives from government agencies, NGOs, and community-based organizations. The workshop was delivered by J.E.A. Consulting, and utilized interactive sessions, panel discussions, and group activities to facilitate knowledge-sharing and actionable solutions. OCP staff were present to support facilitation as needed.

A key outcome of the workshop was the development of a set of recommendations aimed at enhancing GESI integration within the sector. These recommendations will be disseminated through communications and social media channels following the event. This report summarizes the discussions and key insights and serves as a reference for future initiatives to further embed GESI principles in sectoral policies and practices.

## 2. Participant Demographics

The workshop was attended by a diverse group of stakeholders, including representatives from government agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and community-based organizations. The following key demographic insights were recorded:

Of the 51 participants 75% identified as female and 25% male (table 1). A varied range of ages were present with 43% of participants aged between 25-35 years, 37% aged between 35-60 years and 12% and 8% aged between 18-24 years and over 60 years, respectively (table 1).

**Table 1 Gender and age demographics of stakeholders who attended the Improving Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) in the Environmental and Development Sector workshop, February 2025**

Category	Female Participants	Male Participants	Total
<b>Total Participants</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>18-24 years</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>25-35 years</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>35-60 years</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Over 60 years</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4</b>

Participants came from multiple atolls and islands across the Maldives, ensuring representation from both urban centers and remote communities. Organizations based in Addu City, Fuvahmulah City, Kulhudhuffushi City, Ari Atoll Bodufulhadhoo, Raa Atoll, Lhaviyani Naifaru, Baa Eydhafushi and Fulhadhoo, Gaafu Dhaal Fiyori, Laamu Atoll Fonadhoo, Faafu Dharanboodhoo, and Haa Alif Kelaa were represented. This diverse geographic representation provided valuable insights into localized GESI challenges and strategies for SEAH mitigation in different regions.

Additionally, the workshop included the participation of two female migrant workers, whose perspectives contributed to discussions on the challenges faced by migrant communities in the Maldives.

Below is a list of participating organisations:

Parley Maldives	Fulhadhoo Youth Development Society
Salted Ventures Swimmers	Manfaa Aged Care Maldives
Maldives Whale Shark Research Programme (MWSRP)	Watercare
Maldives Authentic Crafts Cooperative Society (MACCS)	Transparency Maldives
Manta Trust - Maldives Manta Conservation Programme	Kelaa Youth Forum
Association of Awareness Recreation and Unity	BeLeaf Maldives
Maldives Womens Association	Ekuveri Funaadu
Atoll Marine Centre	Aware Society
Feyli Jamiyya	Fuvahmulah Youth and Sports Development Association
Association for Dharanboodhoo Development	Eco Youth

Women in Fuvahmulah	Women in Technology
Youth Policy Advisory Group	Gamu Zuvaanunge Jamiyya
FES Fonadhoo	Fonadhoo Zuvaanunge Roohu
Equal Rights Initiative (ERI)	Fansa Maldives
Women's Football Club	Ocean Warriors
Clean Maldives	Women and Democracy
Nala Fehi Meedhoo (Addu)	Hope for Women
Fiyoaree Association for Community Empowerment FACE	Ministry of Gender, Family and Social Services

The demographics of attendees highlight the workshop's inclusivity and engagement across different age groups, genders, and geographic regions. Persons with Disabilities and NGOs representing them were particularly reached out to for the workshop. There are currently no disability rights organizations working within the civil society space in the environment sector in the Maldives. To ensure representation, a civil society advocate engaged in both environmental rights and disability advocacy was confirmed for the workshop. Initially, venues considered had disability access, but due to ongoing school and A-level exams, those venues were unavailable. The only viable venue in Malé within the workshop budget unfortunately had accessibility issues, particularly with restrooms, resulting in the confirmed participant being unable to attend. The significant representation of female participants underscores the emphasis on gender inclusivity, while the presence of stakeholders from both urban and atoll communities enriches the discussion on implementing GESI-sensitive practices in varying local contexts.





Figure 1 Map of Maldives indicating regions of participant representation

### 3. Workshop Agenda

The workshop followed a structured agenda designed to facilitate meaningful discussions and knowledge exchange:

09:00-09:30 - Arrival and Registration

09:30-10:00 - Opening Session (Welcome remarks, guest speeches, group photo)

10:00-11:00 - Session 1A: GESI and SEAH Fundamentals - Part 1 (Concepts and principles)

11:00-11:15 - Break

11:15-11:45 - Session 1B: Q&A and Discussion

11:45-12:30 - Session 2: Community Issues Mapping (Identifying vulnerable groups and challenges)

12:30-13:30 - Lunch Break

13:30-15:00 - Session 3: Case Studies and Best Practices (Panel discussions and organizational best practices)

15:00-15:15 - Break

15:15-16:00 - Session 4: Current Integration & Transformation (Self-assessment and group work)

16:00-16:45 - Session 5: Recommendation Development

16:45-17:00 - Closing Session (Final remarks and post-workshop questionnaire)

## 4. Key Discussions and Findings

### 4.1 Session 1: GESI and SEAH Fundamentals

This session introduced participants to the core principles of GESI and SEAH within the environmental and sustainable development sector. The facilitators provided an overview of key concepts, legal frameworks, and best practices for integrating GESI and SEAH into policies and programs.

Participants engaged in interactive discussions exploring the root causes of exclusion and SEAH risks, emphasizing the importance of institutional policies, cultural sensitivity, and accountability mechanisms. Through scenario-based exercises, they examined how power dynamics, social norms, and institutional gaps contribute to gender inequality and SEAH vulnerabilities in workplace and community settings. The session reinforced the need for proactive strategies, such as clear reporting mechanisms, survivor-centered approaches, and accountability structures to prevent SEAH and promote inclusive work environments. To support participants' understanding and facilitate the breakout sessions, supplementary materials were provided through an e-package. These materials included reference guides on GESI and SEAH principles, case study documentation, best practice toolkits, and reporting mechanism templates. The e-package was designed to assist participants in applying workshop concepts effectively, both during interactive discussions and in their respective organizations.

### 4.2 Session 2: Community Issues Mapping

In this session, stakeholders mapped key challenges faced by marginalized communities in the Maldives. The exercise focused on identifying barriers to inclusion in environmental and development programs, with a specific focus on accessibility, economic constraints, and gender-based exclusion.

Facilitators guided participants through a structured community mapping exercise, where groups identified vulnerable populations, intersectional barriers, and systemic gaps in service delivery. As a result of this Vulnerability Mapping exercise participants identified several vulnerable groups requiring targeted interventions to ensure their inclusion in environmental and development initiatives:

- Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) – Facing accessibility barriers, discrimination, and technological biases, including lack of accessibility and inclusivity in technology.
- Children – Particularly those under state care, experiencing extreme vulnerabilities, including unsafe home environments, lack of access to essential services, and risks of sexual exploitation.
- Women – Excluded from economic and political participation, with specific marginalised groups including single mothers, sex workers, and survivors of forced/early marriage. Women in islands face additional barriers such as limited access to jobs, tertiary education, and financial independence.

- Elderly – Lacking dignified retirement options and struggling with digital exclusion, social isolation, and language barriers. Limited support infrastructure for retirees was noted as a pressing issue. Financial abuse and exploitation, particularly through unstable income sources, were also raised as concerns.
- Youth – Facing high unemployment, substance abuse, and disenfranchisement from the democratic process. Limited opportunities for volunteering and social entrepreneurship were also highlighted.
- Migrant Workers – Experiencing systemic human rights violations such as wage theft and inadequate housing, particularly in tourism and construction industries. Issues of racism, trafficking, and reluctance to seek legal aid were raised as major concerns. Housing conditions and access to justice were noted as additional barriers.
- People Experiencing Poverty – Facing economic exclusion, lack of access to essential services, and social isolation, further limiting their ability to break cycles of poverty. Income inequality and class-based discrimination were recognised as significant obstacles to advancement.
- Persons with Substance Use Disorders (SUDs) – Facing stigma, social exclusion, and limited reintegration support. Participants also noted that SUDs cut across multiple vulnerable groups, affecting youth, women, and elderly populations. Service bias in healthcare and lack of rehabilitation support were identified as key barriers.
- Returnees from Conflict Zones – Struggling with reintegration, social stigma, and access to economic opportunities. Discrimination and isolation were particularly noted as critical barriers.
- Persons in Conflict with the Law – Facing stigma, exclusion from legal protections, and lack of reintegration pathways, particularly those with drug-related offences.
- Homeless Individuals – Struggling with family displacement, lack of access to essential services, and social exclusion, with mental health issues and lack of financial stability exacerbating their challenges.
- Home-Based Workers – Often not recognised within the formal workforce, facing limited economic opportunities, lack of access to social protections, and barriers to expanding their businesses.

Participants highlighted that vulnerabilities often intersect, exacerbating challenges faced by marginalised groups. For example, women with disabilities face compounded barriers to employment, healthcare, and social participation, while migrant workers living in poverty may experience heightened risks of exploitation, language barriers, and racial discrimination. Youth from low-income backgrounds struggle with economic exclusion, limited education, and disenfranchisement from the democratic process, making it harder to secure meaningful opportunities.

Social isolation further deepens these vulnerabilities, particularly for the elderly, who are often forced to relocate to Malé due to lack of services in the islands. Separated from their familiar environments and support networks, they find themselves in congested high-rise apartments with limited accessibility, where they take on increased caregiving responsibilities to enable younger family members to work. This loss of community connection and island way of life

severely impacts their mental well-being, contributing to anxiety, depression, and social withdrawal. Elderly persons experiencing digital exclusion are often further isolated due to a lack of support infrastructure and inaccessible public services, while financial insecurity exposes them to risks of exploitation and economic abuse.

Children in unsafe home environments are more vulnerable to poverty, lack of education, and increased risks of SEAH violations, deepening cycles of marginalisation. People experiencing poverty also face barriers to freedom of speech and expression, limiting their ability to advocate for their rights. Returnees from conflict zones often experience severe discrimination, isolation, and lack of access to basic services, deepening their exclusion from society. Similarly, persons in conflict with the law face difficulties in reintegration, social exclusion, and lack of legal protections, particularly for those with drug-related offences. Additionally, mental health issues emerged as a critical intersectional challenge affecting multiple groups. Social isolation, lack of community support, and limited accessibility to mental health services further exacerbate vulnerabilities, particularly for the elderly, youth, persons with disabilities, and homeless individuals. These overlapping vulnerabilities demonstrate the necessity of multi-layered, cross-sectoral interventions that address multiple layers of disadvantage, ensuring sustainable and equitable development across all sectors.

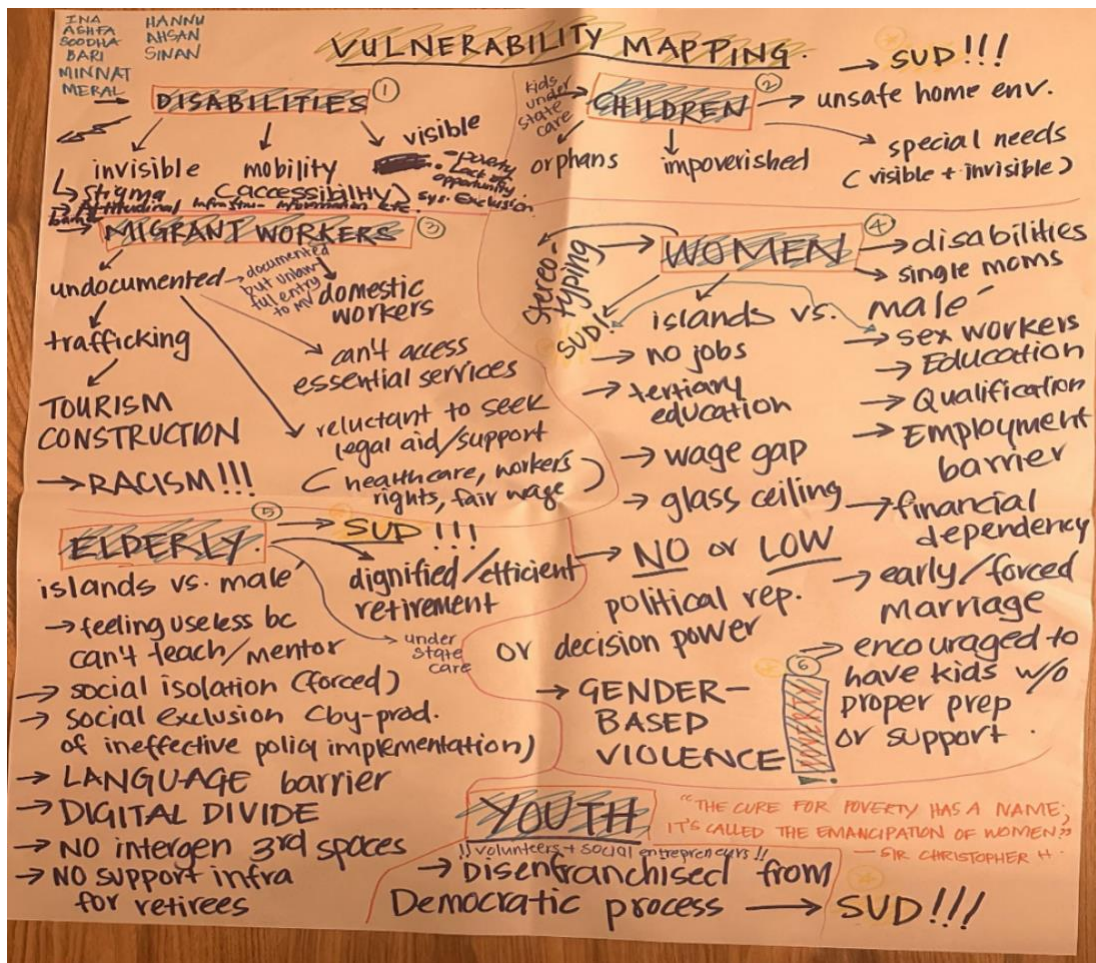


Figure 2 Vulnerability Mapping by a participant group

### 4.3 Session 3: Case Studies and Best Practices

This session showcased real-world examples of successful GESI integration and SEAH mitigation strategies. Through panel discussions and presentations, participants learned from local and international experiences in addressing gender inequality and SEAH risks within development programs. The panel discussion was mostly conducted in Dhivehi.

Key case studies included:

- Community-led environmental initiatives that successfully incorporated gender-sensitive approaches.
- Organizational SEAH policies that improved workplace safety and accountability.
- Best practices in gender-responsive budgeting and policy formulation.

- Innovative tools for GESI-sensitive project design, including participatory methods and inclusive consultation processes.

Following the presentations, participants engaged in group discussions to analyze the case studies and extract actionable insights applicable to their own organizational contexts.

Discussions focused on key projects and interventions, including:

- **Women in Fuvahmulah:** Community-Based Women's Empowerment Initiatives – Assessments on accessibility of information for women regarding legal rights and financial resources, development of SOPs for institutional services and grievance redressal, and partnerships with local institutions to strengthen SEAH prevention mechanisms. Women in Fuvahmulah has also developed its own mandatory SEAH training program required for all programme partners, consultants, and facilitators. They have a SEAH reporting mechanism in place and display advocacy materials against SEAH in their office, ensuring continued awareness and visibility. Their office is also designed to be disability accessible, promoting inclusivity for all. Additionally, Women in Fuvahmulah introduced scholarships for young women to undertake the PADI scuba diving course, breaking barriers to their participation in marine careers. To support inclusivity further, they have also provided childcare assistance to a single mother who faced barriers in undertaking the course due to caregiving responsibilities.
- **Ocean Women's Project:** Gender Inclusion in Marine Conservation – Addressing gender disparities in access to ocean-related careers, conducting informal engagement (e.g., coffee meetings) to encourage women's participation, and training women in swimming and diving, leading to instructor certification.
- **Female Substance Abuse Rehabilitation:** Launching community football and ocean-based therapy programs for women recovering from addiction and addressing mental health and substance abuse stigma through grassroots initiatives.

These discussions highlighted the importance of context-specific adaptation of best practices and underscored the need for capacity-building initiatives to support GESI-sensitive project design. Participants emphasized the need for structured collaborations between community-led initiatives, policymakers, and donor agencies to sustain the impact of GESI and SEAH interventions.



**Figure 3 Best Practice Panel Discussion**

## **4.4 Session 4: Current Integration and Transformation**

In this self-assessment session, participants evaluated the current level of GESI and SEAH integration in their respective organisations and projects. The facilitators provided a GESI Integration Assessment Framework, guiding participants through an institutional audit to identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for improvement. Participants evaluation of their current considerations of GESI and SEAH was undertaken through self assessment, and participants were not asked to share their results.

Participants:

- Assessed existing policies and practices within their organizations.
- Identified gaps in implementation and areas requiring further support.
- Shared challenges in enforcing SEAH policies and GESI strategies.

The session concluded with a commitment exercise, where participants outlined immediate steps they could take to strengthen GESI integration and SEAH risk mitigation in their work.

## **4.5 Session 5: Recommendation Development**

The final session of the workshop focused on developing practical recommendations and commitments to enhance GESI integration and SEAH mitigation across organizations and projects. Participants engaged in group discussions to reflect on their aspirations, challenges, and strategies for strengthening GESI and SEAH in their work.



Each participant recorded their individual commitments and proposed actions, which were later analyzed to formulate collective recommendations. These recommendations were structured into key thematic areas, ensuring a comprehensive and actionable roadmap for implementation.

## Key Recommendations and Actionable Steps

### **Strengthening GESI Integration in Organizational and Project Planning**

- Conduct vulnerability mapping and analyses, baseline assessments, and community stakeholder mapping at all project stages, especially during planning.
- Collect and utilize gender-disaggregated data to ensure targeted interventions.
- Develop deliberate inclusion and outreach goals to ensure diverse and meaningful participation in programs.

### **Promoting Inclusive Leadership and Participation**

- Establish mechanisms to increase women's representation in leadership roles within organizations and community initiatives.
- Ensure diverse voices, including those of Persons With Disabilities (PWDS), youth, and other marginalized groups, are integrated into decision-making.
- Implement mentoring programs to support and empower underrepresented groups.

### **Enhancing Accessibility, Education, and Awareness**

- Incorporate GESI-focused education and awareness components into all projects and policies.
- Improve accessibility in project design, implementation, and outreach, ensuring that materials and spaces are inclusive.
- Provide childcare support to enable women's participation in training and professional activities.
- Establish scholarships and training opportunities to support women's skill development in leadership and technical fields.

### **Embedding GESI into Project Design, Implementation, and Monitoring**

- Ensure GESI-sensitive approaches are embedded across project planning, execution, and MEL (Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning).
- Develop standardized frameworks and practical tools for GESI-sensitive program implementation.
- Promote long-term sustainability of GESI-focused initiatives by securing institutional and funding support.

**SEAH Mitigation Strategies** Recognizing the critical need for SEAH prevention and response, participants collectively recommended the following organisational and sector-wide strategies:

- **Adopt SEAH Policies:** Require organizations to establish clear SEAH policies with disciplinary measures for violations.
- **Mandatory SEAH Training:** Train all project staff and make SEAH training mandatory for partners and partner organisations.
- **Redress and Complaints Mechanisms:** Implement accessible and transparent SEAH complaints mechanisms within organisations and projects. Consider community-integrated models to improve accessibility.
- **Designation of SEAH Focal Points:** Appoint designated SEAH focal points within organisations and projects to ensure accountability.
- **Awareness Materials:** Develop and distribute SEAH mitigation awareness materials that are accessible and prominently visible in all workplaces and community spaces.

## 5. Next Steps for Implementation

Participants committed to advancing GESI and SEAH principles in their respective fields by establishing the necessary mechanisms and increasing awareness within their organizations and communities. However, they identified key challenges, including limited access to guidelines, frameworks, and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for SEAH cases, as well as inadequate funding and institutional support.

To address these challenges, participants emphasized the need for:

- Expanded training opportunities to build technical capacity on GESI and SEAH integration.
- Accessible resource materials, including handbooks, manuals, and guidance documents.
- Standardized templates and SOPs to facilitate implementation and internal training.

### 5.1 Commitment to a Common Platform and Network of Practitioners

To ensure sustained progress, participants agreed to establish a common platform for sharing best practices, challenges, and lessons learned in GESI and SEAH implementation. This network will:

- Foster knowledge exchange, sharing of success stories and peer learning.
- Provide mentorship opportunities for emerging practitioners.
- Serve as a collaborative space for organizations to strengthen policies and practices.
- Support joint advocacy efforts for gender-sensitive and SEAH-responsive policies.

### 5.2 Ensuring Lasting Impact

Despite progress in strengthening GESI and SEAH awareness, participants acknowledged persistent challenges in implementation, particularly around SEAH mitigation. The workshop confirmed that SEAH remains a critical knowledge gap, reinforcing the need for additional resources and an extended workshop format to deepen engagement. Participants also identified specific concerns related to community awareness and volunteer recruitment, reflecting a shift from general knowledge acquisition to practical implementation challenges.

To create lasting impact, participants recommended building sustainable local capacity and knowledge transfer mechanisms. This includes:

- Developing localized resources and tools adaptable to different contexts.
- Establishing ongoing learning and mentoring systems to support implementation.

- Creating a community of practice, enabling organizations to share expertise while supporting newer practitioners.
- Implementing Training of Trainers (ToT) programs to cultivate a strong pipeline of trained advocates who can advance GESI and SEAH initiatives across the sector.

### 5.3 Concrete Steps For Implementation

To operationalize these commitments, participants outlined the following steps:

- Develop organizational action plans to integrate GESI and SEAH into policies and programming.
- Engage leadership and institutional stakeholders to formalize commitments.
- Establish partnerships with government, NGOs, and international actors to mobilize resources and technical expertise.
- Implement monitoring and evaluation systems to track progress and ensure accountability.

These collective recommendations provide a strategic roadmap for organizations to institutionalize GESI and SEAH commitments, foster collaboration, and ensure long-term impact and sustainability of these efforts within the environmental and sustainable development sectors in the Maldives.

## 6. Workshop Outcome Evaluation: Pre and Post Workshop Assessment Analysis

To support monitoring and evaluation, participants were asked to complete pre and post workshop questionnaires. Pre-workshop assessments revealed varying levels of familiarity across gender equality, social inclusion, and SEAH domains among the 41 participants that completed the survey. While respondents demonstrated moderate familiarity with gender equality and social inclusion concepts, there was notably lower familiarity with SEAH principles and practices. This knowledge gap in SEAH represented a critical area for development, particularly given its significance in development work. The assessment also highlighted substantial practical experience in community engagement and social inclusion, especially among local NGOs and community-based organizations.

Based on post-workshop feedback from 41 participants, using a rating scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree):

- 80.5% of participants believed the workshop objectives were clearly met.
- 35% agreed and 57.5% strongly agreed that the information shared was relevant to their work.
- The workshop activities were rated 4.47 out of 5 in enhancing participants' understanding of GESI and SEAH concepts, with 65% strongly agreeing.

- 82.1% of participants strongly agreed that facilitators were knowledgeable, while 12% agreed.
- 43.9% of participants felt confident at level 4 in understanding GESI principles, and 41.5% were very confident (level 5).
- Regarding SEAH concerns, 40% of participants were confident, and 32% were very confident in addressing SEAH issues.
- Participants identified the first session on understanding GESI and SEAH principles as the most useful session.

Post-workshop evaluations indicated that participants largely felt the workshop objectives were met, with 80.5% of participants believing the workshop objectives were clearly met. Additionally, 35% agreed and 57.5% strongly agreed that the information shared at the workshop was relevant to their work.

Participants assigned an average rating of 4.47 out of 5 when asked whether the workshop activities enhanced their understanding of GESI and SEAH concepts, with 17.5% agreeing and 65% strongly agreeing. Most participants also believed that the pacing and timing of the workshop were effective, with 32.5% agreeing and 55% strongly agreeing on this aspect.

Facilitator competency was rated highly, with 82.1% of participants strongly agreeing that facilitators were knowledgeable, and 12% agreeing. When asked to rank their confidence level in understanding GESI principles from 1 (not confident) to 5 (very confident), 43.9% of participants expressed confidence at level 4, while 41.5% of participants were very confident (level 5). Regarding their ability to address SEAH concerns, 40% of participants were confident, and 32% were very confident.

However, while participants expressed reasonable confidence in their grasp of GESI principles, they felt less prepared for implementing SEAH mechanisms and supporting vulnerable groups. Many requested additional resource materials, sample SOPs, and guidelines to strengthen their understanding further.

Comparing the pre and post assessments reveals an interesting trajectory. The workshop appears to have successfully addressed the initial knowledge gaps, particularly in GESI understanding. However, the persistent uncertainty around SEAH implementation, suggests this remains an area requiring focused attention. This aligns with the pre-workshop identification of SEAH as a key knowledge gap. The participants' requests for additional resources and their suggestions for extended workshop duration (two days) indicate that whilst the workshop was beneficial, there remains a need for more comprehensive support, particularly in translating theoretical understanding into practical implementation. The emergence of specific concerns about community awareness and volunteer recruitment also suggests the workshop successfully moved participants from general knowledge acquisition to more nuanced understanding of implementation challenges.

## 7. Challenges and Areas for Improvement

Participants noted that while they were committed to implementing GESI and SEAH principles in their work, they anticipated several challenges, including:

- Lack of available resources such as guidelines, frameworks, and SOPs for SEAH cases.
- Limited funding and institutional support for implementing GESI-sensitive practices.
- Need for additional training and access to resource materials, including handbooks and manuals on GESI and SEAH.

## 8. Recommendations for Future workshops

Participants provided feedback on improving future workshops, including:

- Ensuring the inclusion of persons with disabilities (PWDs) in future sessions.
- Extending the workshop duration to two days to allow for deeper discussion and more interactive activities.
- Providing a larger venue to accommodate more participants and facilitate better engagement.

The pre- and post-workshop assessments highlight the progress made in GESI and SEAH awareness as a result of the workshop while also underscoring the need for continued capacity-building efforts, particularly in SEAH implementation. These findings reinforce the importance of sustained knowledge-sharing, access to practical tools, and the establishment of a community of practice to ensure the long-term impact of GESI and SEAH integration within the environmental and sustainable development sectors in the Maldives.